United Nations S/PV.6757 (Resumption 1)

# Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

*Provisional*

## 6757th meeting

Monday, 23 April 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Ms. Rice | (United States of America) |
| *Members*: | Azerbaijan | Mr. Musayev |
| | China | Mr. Zhu Yanwei |
| | Colombia | Mrs. Escorcia |
| | France | Ms. Legendre |
| | Germany | Mr. Tillmann |
| | Guatemala | Mr. Briz Gutiérrez |
| | India | Mr. Ravindra |
| | Morocco | Mr. Erroja |
| | Pakistan | Mr. Munir |
| | Portugal | Ms. Teixeira Coelho |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Zhdanov |
| | South Africa | Mr. Klaas |
| | Togo | Mr. Akpoto Komlagan |
| | United Kingdom | Mr. Day |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.*

**The President**: Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Kazakhstan and Ecuador to participate in today's meeting.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

**Mr. Mayr-Harting**: I thank you, Madam President, for giving the floor to the European Union (EU). The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Albania; the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

While the Arab world is witnessing fundamental change, the need to ensure meaningful progress on the Middle East peace process remains as important as ever. The European Union wishes to stress once again the central role of the Quartet in that context and to express its full support for the ongoing Quartet process. It reaffirms its commitment to all elements of the Quartet statement of 23 September 2011 (see SG/2178). The Quartet, meeting on 11 April, renewed its call on the parties to meet those objectives (see SG/2182).

Negotiations are the best way forward if there is to be a lasting resolution to the conflict. The European Union therefore welcomes the expected exchange of letters between the parties initiated on 17 April, and urges both sides to build on the momentum of the current contacts in order to resume direct talks. A bold and decisive demonstration of political leadership is needed from both sides.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to a two-State solution. The legitimacy of the State of Israel and the right of Palestinians to achieve statehood must never be called into question. The European Union reaffirms its clear positions on negotiations with regard to parameters, principles and issues, including the conclusions of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in December 2009, December 2010, May, July and October 2011, and January 2012, as well as the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union to the Security Council on 21 April 2011 (see S/PV.6520). The European Union also reiterates its support for the Arab Peace Initiative.

The European Union calls on the parties to demonstrate their commitment to a peaceful solution by taking actions that can build confidence and create the environment of trust necessary to ensure meaningful negotiations leading to a comprehensive and lasting peace. At this critical juncture, it is more important than ever for the parties to refrain from provocative actions that undermine the prospects for continuing the dialogue re-established in January, and to respect their obligations under the Road Map. That includes incursions by Israeli forces into Area A of the West Bank, which put in jeopardy the success of Palestinian institution-building efforts and the mutual obligation to end all forms of incitement.

The European Union reiterates its support for the Palestinian Authority's institution-building efforts and its recurrent budget, to which the European Union is the largest donor. The continuing financial difficulties of the Palestinian Authority risk putting in danger the major achievements it has made so far, not least in providing security in the West Bank. Therefore, the European Union underlines the necessity for other donors to identify and transfer funds to assist the Palestinian Authority.

However, the majority of the Palestinian Authority's budget is met by its own customs and taxation revenues. The European Union therefore continues to urge the swift implementation of improvements currently being discussed between the parties to the mechanism by which those are collected and transferred, which should be transparent and predictable. Furthermore, monthly transfers of those revenues are an obligation.

Among the factors that will help the Palestinian economy become sustainable is the relaxing of Israeli restrictions on access to land, water, raw materials and export markets. Area C of the West Bank constitutes the largest area of land for the Palestinians. Ensuring access to that area will help the Palestinian Authority achieve greater economic potential. The EU calls on the parties to cooperate in order to facilitate the social and economic development of Area C, which is of

critical importance to the viability of a future Palestinian State.

The European Union reiterates that settlements, the separation barrier where built on occupied land, the demolition of homes and evictions are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-State solution impossible. The European Union urges the Government of Israel to immediately end all settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the approval of new construction in a range of settlements, such as Shvut Rachel, Gilo and Har Homa. The European Union is also deeply concerned about retroactive approvals that have been granted for housing built without previous Israeli authorization in settlements and outposts. The European Union is closely following developments with regard to Migron, the largest such outpost.

As regards Gaza in particular, the European Union has followed with concern the recent escalation of violence in Gaza and southern Israel. The situation in and around Gaza will remain fragile and unsustainable as long as the West Bank and Gaza are not reunited under the legitimate Palestinian Authority, adhering to the commitments undertaken by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The European Union calls for the complete cessation of all rocket attacks on Israel and all other forms of violence. The European Union calls for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) and the Agreement on Movement and Access, for the full respect of international humanitarian law, and for an immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings. Despite some welcome progress, Israel needs to take further meaningful and far-reaching steps, allowing for the reconstruction and economic recovery of the Gaza Strip. The European Union calls for a solution addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.

The EU has consistently called for intra-Palestinian reconciliation behind President Mahmoud Abbas as an important element of the unity of a future Palestinian State and of reaching a two-State solution.

Finally, regarding Syria, the European Union welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2043 (2012) establishing the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). The EU calls for the immediate implementation of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), and urges the Syrian Government to ensure the effective operation and deployment of the Mission and allow freedom of movement, access and communication. The European Union reaffirms its full support for the six-point plan of Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and League of Arab States, Mr. Kofi Annan, and calls upon the Syrian Government to immediately and visibly implement all elements of the Joint Special Envoy's plan, as it committed to do in its 25 March and 1 April communications to Joint Special Envoy Annan.

The European Union remains deeply concerned about the situation in Syria and the fragility of the cessation of violence, in view of reports of the use of heavy weaponry in civilian areas. The EU calls on the Syrian Government to show a visible change by withdrawing all troops and heavy weapons from population centres to their barracks in order to facilitate a sustained cessation of violence. It calls upon all parties in Syria to immediately cease violence in all its forms.

The European Union reiterates its concerns about the humanitarian situation in Syria and urges the Syrian authorities to grant immediate, unimpeded and full access of humanitarian organizations to all areas in Syria to deliver humanitarian assistance, including medical care.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Nishida** (Japan): Madam President, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East. Japan continues to be deeply concerned about the evolution of the situation in Syria over the past year. We condemn the Syrian authorities' wide-scale use of force and violations of human rights against their own citizens, and we profoundly deplore the deaths of more than 9,000 people as a result of violence.

Japan strongly supports the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Kofi Annan, and commends his mediation efforts.

We reiterate our call on the Syrian authorities to unconditionally implement Mr. Annan's six-point proposal in its entirety in order to bring an end to all violence and human rights violations, secure humanitarian access, and facilitate a Syrian-led political transition based upon the Syrian people's legitimate aspirations to democracy.

Japan welcomes the adoption of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) as important steps in the international community's concerted efforts to address the situation in Syria, and highly commends the dedicated work of all those concerned, in particular the members of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Envoy. At the same time, we express deep concern over the escalation of violence in recent days and the failure of the Syrian authorities to fulfil their commitments. We call upon all parties in Syria to refrain from resorting to force of any kind, so that a complete cessation of armed violence may be fulfilled and the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria may thereby carry out its mandate fully and effectively. In this connection, we underline the importance of ensuring the safety of deployed observers, and call upon the Syrian authorities to fully cooperate with the relevant United Nations personnel in order to ensure the effective operation of the Mission.

Japan is also concerned about the humanitarian situation of the Syrian people, including internally displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries. For this reason, the Government of Japan provided $3 million in emergency grant aid in March through the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We underline the importance of allowing humanitarian personnel full and unimpeded access to people in need of assistance.

With regard to the Middle East peace process, Japan firmly supports a two-State solution in which Israel and a future independent Palestinian State would live side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition. A two-State solution can be achieved only through sincere negotiations between the parties concerned.

In this connection, Japan supports the elements of the Quartet's statement of 23 September 2011, which was reaffirmed by the Quartet principals two weeks ago. Japan also pays respect to the leadership of the Government of Jordan in advancing dialogue between the parties. We strongly expect that the recent efforts, including the correspondence from President Abbas to Prime Minister Netanyahu, will lead to the early resumption of direct negotiations.

Japan does not recognize any measures that prejudge the outcome of final status negotiations, and in order to build mutual trust calls upon both sides to refrain from any provocative actions. Both parties must abide by their obligations under previous agreements. Japan reiterates its strong call on Israel to immediately freeze its settlement activities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, which are a violation of international law. At the same time, we call upon the Palestinian Authority to continue its efforts to improve security and fulfil its commitments to ceasing violence and working against incitement.

Japan supports the efforts of the Palestinian Authority towards establishing statehood. Prime Minister Noda conveyed our commitment to strengthening assistance in that regard directly to President Abbas during his visit to Japan earlier this month. Japan also calls upon the Government of Israel to support the fiscal stability of the Palestinian Authority, including by conducting sustainable tax transfers to the Palestinian Authority.

**The President**: I give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

**Mr. Al-Hussein** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We meet today in exceptional international and regional conditions, as the Arab world is experiencing serious challenges and decisive transformations.

The situation imposes on us significant responsibilities to our people and future generations. On that basis and the basis of our principles in general, my delegation believes that our responsibilities requires us to condemn the massacre and targeting of innocent civilians. These practices are prohibited from a moral, humane and legal point of view. They are banned by religious and secular law, run counter to humanitarian international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and must therefore be subject to national and international legal accountability.

Jordan considers that, despite all of the current developments in the region, the Palestinian question remains the main and central issue in the Middle East. That belief sparked the recent Jordan initiative to start

initial exploratory negotiations by bringing the two parties together to support the efforts of the international Quartet and to move on from the impasse in which the negotiations are bogged down.

In that regard, Jordan welcomes the letter of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas addressed to Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, the head of the Israeli Government. We reaffirm by the same token the contents of this letter, and we hope that there will be a positive response from the Israeli side.

(*spoke in English*)

The Permanent Representative of Israel mentioned in his statement this morning that the West Bank was part of Jordan from 1948 to 1967 and that "the Arab world did not lift a finger to create a Palestinian State". I regret that he made this remark, which represents a sterile and somewhat dated argument long put forward by the neo-revisionists in Israel, which prompts me to note the following.

First, the act of union of 1950 was agreed to without prejudice to the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. Perhaps the clearest demonstration of this fact was the attendance of his late Majesty, King Hussein, at the opening ceremony marking the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1964. Secondly, to cover the deeper implications behind this Israeli assertion, I wish to state that what was non-Israeli territory prior to 1948 remains non-Israeli territory today.

Let us assume that the status of the territory from 1950 to 1967 remains in dispute — a dispute between us, the Jordanians and the Palestinians. What is not in dispute is that, however we argue about it, we all agree that this territory was non-Israeli territory, and this remains so today. In actual fact, there is no dispute. The Security Council and the International Court of Justice have affirmed repeatedly in the case of the Council that the territory is and has since 1967 been occupied Palestinian territory.

I also wish to deal with another incomplete assertion. The Permanent Representative of Israel made the point that we closed the holy sites in Jerusalem to Jews during the period of Jordan's administration, but he did not say why. The action was taken by us because Christian Palestinians had not been permitted by Israel to travel to Nazareth. In other words, we responded to a prior action undertaken by the Israeli Government. If the Ambassador of Israel wants to assert the truth, he needs to assert all of it.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

As regards the prevailing situation in the brotherly country of the Syrian Arab Republic, our position is to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis and to provide our support to the mission of the former Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. Jordan has extended its hand to the brotherly Syrian people and will continue to do so. We appeal for the Syrian people not to be abandoned in this very difficult time. We also call for an end to the targeting of innocent Syrian civilians and the start of a serious dialogue between the Government and the opposition to put an end to the cycle of violence and destruction and to protect the cultural and humanitarian heritage of the Syrian Arab Republic for its sake and for the sake of humanity. The Syrian Arab Republic is our neighbour, and so are its people, with their deeply Arab roots. Syria's security is our security, and its interests are also ours.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

**Mrs. Dunlop** (Brazil): I thank you, Madam President, for having convened this meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing, and the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

The past three months since the Council's most recent open debate on the situation in the Middle East (see S/PV.6706) have been profuse in developments in the region. Unfortunately, a great deal of these recent developments have not brought about the long-awaited solutions to current crises or shown a way out of the present stalemates.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process has seen no progress, despite the latest efforts of the Jordanian authorities, which had cast a ray of hope. On the contrary, we have been watching with dismay and serious concern the steady and unabated continuation of illegal settlement activity in the occupied territories, which puts in grave jeopardy the prospects for a two-State solution.

Brazil considers the continuation of the illegal settlement policy to be the most important single reason for the long-standing and dangerous paralysis of the peace process. The international community must

not allow this policy to turn the idea of peace between Palestinians and Israelis into an ever-elusive goal. We reiterate our call on Israel to stop and reverse settlement activity. In our view, the recognition of the Palestinian people's legitimate right to sovereignty and self-determination will contribute to Israel's security.

In the present circumstances, it is high time that the efforts undertaken by the Quartet yield concrete and significant results so as to bring the peace process back to life. The Council also needs to fulfil its Charter responsibilities with regard to the question of Palestine and act in order to avoid the prospects for peace unravelling. A greater involvement of the Security Council is past due. Brazil reiterates its proposal that, as a first step, the Quartet regularly report to the Council on progress that might have been achieved on the commitments undertaken by the parties.

I now turn to the situation in Syria. It is vital that the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to greater political participation, economic opportunities, dignity and social justice be fully heard and realized. Brazil continues to unequivocally condemn all violence against civilians, in particular that committed by State agents, and deplores all violations of human rights.

We welcome the display of unity that allowed the Council to adopt resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012). We have always said that the Council could best help if it were able to send clear and unified messages to all relevant actors in Syria.

Brazil underlines the crucial role of Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan, in bringing about a political solution to the crisis. We support and commend his six-point plan. We welcome the establishment of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). We fully concur with the Secretary-General's assessment that the Supervision Mission can assist in the creation of conditions for a comprehensive political dialogue in Syria. Brazil fully supports the Supervision Mission and expects the Government of Syria to ensure its effective operation.

If UNSMIS is to be successful, violence must stop immediately. The continuation of violence, irrespective of its origin, is unacceptable. The Syrian Government, which bears the greater responsibility for easing tensions and stopping the violence, must fulfil its commitments and fully implement all aspects of the six-point plan. The opposition must understand that dialogue, not armed struggle, is the means to advance democracy, freedom and justice, and act accordingly.

In line with Brazil's commitment to stability in Syria, we are ready to do our part and to support the United Nations efforts, including by contributing to the supervision of the cessation of all violence, in accordance with resolution 2043 (2012).

Before concluding, let me say that Brazil continues to carefully follow the situation in Lebanon. We have recently renewed our interest in maintaining our current contribution of personnel and equipment to the maritime task force of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which constitutes further indication of the Brazilian commitment to the success of the United Nations efforts in Lebanon, to peace and stability in the Middle East, and to the work of the United Nations peacekeeping missions.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

**Mr. Quinlan** (Australia): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate.

Australia, like all of us, shares the world's frustration with the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process. Oslo was in 1993, and the historic Arab Peace Initiative in 2002, 10 years ago. Like many, we welcomed the Quartet statement of 23 September 2011, but progress is stagnant. We applaud the efforts of King Abdullah and Foreign Minister Judeh of Jordan to kick-start direct dialogue, and we encourage them to continue despite the obstacles.

We also welcome the meeting last week in Jerusalem between the senior Palestinian delegation, led by chief negotiator Erekat and Prime Minister Netanyahu, and Mr. Netanyahu's commitment to responding within two weeks to the letter delivered to him from President Abbas. We share the hope expressed by Under-Secretary-General Pascoe this morning that this exchange of letters will provide an opening for peace, but we have to recognize that the window is closing very quickly — closing on the Palestinian inalienable right to self-determination and on the best prospect for Israel's long-term security.

As the Quartet noted in its statement of 11 April (SG/2182), the situation on the ground is increasingly fragile. The Quartet has repeatedly called on the parties to refrain from unilateral or provocative actions that prejudge the outcome of negotiations, but Israeli

settlement activity remains a very serious concern. My own country has consistently called for this activity to cease. Our Foreign Minister did so again on 10 April.

Settlements are directly corroding the viability of a two-State solution. The most recent decisions are contrary to commitments made by the Israeli Government itself. It is also imperative that violence of any kind targeting civilians, including rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza, must stop. But, while we recognize Israel's legitimate security concerns, more must be done, and quickly, to ease the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Australia is greatly concerned that, if direct negotiations do not commence soon, the prospects for peace and a two-State solution will simply disappear. An early resumption of direct talks, on the basis of the 1967 boundaries and with agreed land swaps, is needed urgently and we encourage both sides to resume talks on that basis. We also call on international and regional donors to continue to assist the Palestinian Authority to ensure its financial viability, even during times of tight global financial circumstances. It is essential that the decisive gains made in building Palestinian institutions not be reversed, if we are genuine about a Palestinian State.

We admire the efforts of the Palestinian leadership to create a strong base for statehood, and my own country will continue supporting the Palestinians in those efforts, including through our multi-year partnership agreement. We will also soon sign a new multi-year partnership with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East with increased funding.

The stagnation in the Middle East peace process between Israel and Palestine is, as we know, just not sustainable. We must prevent a two-State solution from slipping away. There must be an immediate end to settlement expansion and an early resumption of direct talks.

Turning very briefly to the situation in Syria, we welcome the Council's unanimous support, through resolution 2043 (2012), to deploy a United Nations observer mission to monitor a ceasefire and to support the full implementation of Special Envoy Annan's six-point plan. It is essential that we continue to speak with one voice against the serious atrocities that we have been witnessing.

But we have to be hard-headed about that. The Syrian Government has yet to implement its obligations regarding the actions of its troops and the removal of heavy weapons. Violence continues, and very little progress has been made on the ground. Denial of humanitarian access is just unacceptable. We urge Syria, in the strongest terms, to ensure the effective operation of the mission, and we urge all parties to honour the ceasefire.

We must also be concerned about the approximately 40,000 Syrians who have fled to neighbouring countries. My own country will continue to play a practical role in helping to meet the immediate needs of the Syrian people and those who have had to flee, including to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

To conclude, the situation in Syria is plainly dangerous and that is obvious to all of us. The atrocities committed within the country are unacceptable. The regional implications are growing. The Council has unanimously recognized the need for it to monitor very closely how its own resolutions are being implemented or how they will not be implemented or are not being implemented. That need is as compelling as it is obvious.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

**Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia): As this is Indonesia's first opportunity to address the Council this month, please allow me to congratulate the United States of America and you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency, and we welcome the convening of this open debate. Let me also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing. Indonesia associates itself with the statement of the Non-Aligned Movement delivered earlier by the representative of Egypt, as well as the statement of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which will be delivered later by the representative of Kazakhstan.

Several previous speakers have alluded to the fact that the current situation between the Palestinians and Israelis is uncertain and difficult. Indonesia fully concurs with that assessment, yet wishes to pose the question as to what we have done to alleviate the suffering of the people in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Indonesia is deeply concerned that the international efforts to meet and advance the issue have failed so far to facilitate the resumption of direct talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis, which would shape a path to a negotiated agreement before the end of the year. It is noteworthy that the need for both sides to avoid provocations that would be detrimental to the prospects of peace has been repeatedly expressed by the majority of Member States. Despite that, not only have settlement activities not subsided, they continue before our very eyes to increase in volume and intensity.

It has been widely reported recently that Palestinian State-building efforts face an increased risk of failing. The deterioration of the progress achieved so far, coupled with the financial and political burden on the Palestinian Authority, has truly hampered and blocked any potential success.

Indonesia wishes to restate its strong condemnation of all policies designed to whittle down the authority of the Palestinian Authority or frustrate the desires of Palestinians to build their capacity for eventual statehood. We have repeatedly stated our unwavering support of the efforts of Palestinians to build such State structures, and we have in fact committed ourselves to capacity-building efforts in that regard.

In line with that, Indonesia yet again joins the international community in declaring its untiring support for and solidarity with the Palestinians in their quest for the realization of their inalienable rights, including their right to have an independent and sovereign State. We reiterate our support for the vision of two States living side by side in peace and look forward to the eventual establishment of the State of Palestine. As we focus on that objective, the international community must move beyond rhetoric. We must contribute in real terms to supporting the Palestinian people in preparation for the day when they finally exercise their right of sovereignty.

The resilience of the Palestinian people is worthy of recognition. They have endured repression and endless mayhem for decades. Despite that, they have kept on moving towards achieving their dream of independent statehood. The dream of our Palestinian friends, brothers and sisters, is simply to have a State they can call their own.

Unfortunately, the dream of the Palestinians and their journey to an independent State have continued to be beset by hurdles and setbacks. Israel, with infamous ingenuity, continues to combine persistent hostility towards the Palestinians with determined efforts to frustrate the peace process.

Israel must recognize that we are living in an era when human rights must be respected and protected and that the will of the oppressed will prevail. No country can have a clear conscience if it resorts to brutal repression. No country can expect to wear the mantle of dignity by ignoring universal democratic values. It is, therefore, also the responsibility of the international community to continue its efforts to create conditions conducive to the early establishment of an independent State of Palestine.

Finally, with regard to the situation in Lebanon and in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, my delegation calls upon Israel to fully respect Lebanon's sovereignty and stop violating resolution 1701 (2006). We further urge Israel to immediately halt its actions aimed at altering the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, and to abide by resolution 497 (1981).

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

**Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia): Let me first congratulate you, Madam, on your presidency of the Council for this month and, secondly, align my delegation with the statements delivered by the representatives of Egypt, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and Kazakhstan, on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, respectively. I also wish to thank Ambassador Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing earlier today.

Malaysia has been closely watching recent developments regarding the Palestinian question. We welcome all attempts by the international community to find ways and means to resolve that long-standing issue. Those efforts include the Middle East Quartet meeting of 11 April, as well as the efforts by Jordan to revive negotiations between the two States. Malaysia also welcomes and fully supports the Palestinian efforts to restart meaningful negotiations with Israel, as conveyed in a letter from President Mahmoud Abbas to the Israeli Prime Minister on 17 April. Malaysia also echoes the Non-Aligned Movement's call for implementation of the recommendation made by

Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to the Security Council on 18 January with respect to the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

In support of all of those efforts, Malaysia will continue to urge Switzerland, in its capacity as depositary of the Geneva Conventions, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, to convene a conference of the high contracting parties, at the earliest opportunity, to discuss issues related to the Convention in the context of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

We have witnessed rapid and substantive developments in the Arab world in the past 15 months, which have become known as the Arab Spring. While there have been positive outcomes, we have indirectly and unintentionally neglected the people of Palestine, who have been forced to live under the longest illegal military occupation in modern history. Palestine has recently been sidelined by other major events in the Middle East. In that regard, Malaysia calls upon Member States to refocus their attention on Palestine.

While most of the world's attention seemed to be drawn to the Arab Spring, with particular regard to the protection of human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles, Malaysia wishes to draw the attention of the international community to Israel's continued violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, even as I speak now. The situation in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem, is dire, with the growing entrenchment of illegal Israeli settlers and unprovoked violence committed by those settlers, often under the watch of the Israeli authorities, who have themselves done little or nothing to deter such violence.

I would not be doing justice to the Palestinians if I failed to mention the illegal blockade of Gaza, which is now entering its fifth year. Having witnessed its effects during my visit there last July under the auspices of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the illegal blockade is a cruel case of the deliberate economic strangulation of Palestine and a form of collective punishment that fully violates international law. Seventy per cent of the population of the narrow Gaza Strip, or 1.1 million inhabitants, have become dependent on United Nations humanitarian assistance. To alleviate the suffering, Malaysia calls on Israel to unconditionally and completely lift the illegal blockade.

Obviously, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is deplorable and appalling. In order to salvage the two-State solution, where both Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace and security, it is important that the international community, particularly the Security Council, address the Palestinian application for membership in the United Nations with the appropriate urgency, and collectively strengthen its pressure for an end to Israel's illegal occupation.

My delegation welcomes the recent adoption of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), aimed at addressing the complex crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. We hope that, through the six-point proposal of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States and the Council's resolutions, the loss of life will end and normalcy will return to Syria. Malaysia also seeks a peaceful settlement through an inclusive Syrian-led political process, where the rights of all parties are protected.

In that connection, we also hope that the international zeal that is visible on that issue can be replicated in efforts to end the illegal Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan, in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

On a similar note, with regard to Lebanon, we call on all concerned parties to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006).

We wish to reiterate that addressing the Palestinian question requires that the international community, particularly the Security Council, act truthfully and sincerely to achieve a just peace in the region. The Council should undertake immediate and substantive actions to address the Palestinian question by upholding its own resolutions.

To that end, Malaysia reiterates its call on Member States that have yet to do so to recognize the independent State of Palestine. We cannot continue to deny the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State of Palestine based on the two-State solution, within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua.

**Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Nicaragua aligns itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Egypt in his capacity as the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Once again, Nicaragua reiterates its strongest condemnation of Israel's illegal occupation of all Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories, and demands its immediate withdrawal. We condemn the Israeli policies and practices aimed at the construction, rather than the dismantlement of, settlements, as well as the inhuman blockade of Gaza and the policy of dismembering the West Bank and other Palestinian territories. We can no longer allow the logic of denying the very existence of the Palestinian State to continue. Such logic has also led to a true besiegement policy that is based upon an undeclared determination to deny each and every Palestinian citizen their fundamental human existence.

Since the triumph of the Sandanista revolution, in 1979, Nicaragua has been a proud witness to the struggle of the Palestinian people. We recognize the substantial concessions made by Palestine in order to achieve peace, although they have, regrettably, been met by Israel's continued illegal settlements, increased humiliation, increased killings, growing instances of systematic assassination of Palestinian leaders and greater destruction of homes and more looting, including in East Jerusalem.

Nicaragua reiterates the need to put an immediate end to the Israel's impunity, which has been irresponsibly guaranteed to it by a permanent member of the Council, in particular through the indiscriminate use of the veto by that member, who has become Israel's major accomplice.

We all know that the Council has at its disposal the mechanisms necessary to demand that Israel change its policies and practices once and for all, that it be held accountable for its actions and that it implement the resolutions of the Organization.

It is time to recognize the Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, as well as for everyone, in particular the members of the Council, to set aside the double standards of requiring some, but not others, to comply with the obligations that we have entered into as Members of the Organization. That is the only way that we can achieve a firm and lasting peace that allows both peoples to effectively exercise all of their rights and makes it possible to ultimately end an inexplicable injustice.

In addition to the dangerous stalemate that has developed vis-à-vis the Palestinian question through a lack of political will, we have also witnessed how the situation in the Middle East and in the surrounding regions has worsened every day as the result of a clear tendency to resolve conflicts through the use of weapons and war, rather than through dialogue and negotiation.

During the 1980s, when the same protagonists we have today were promoting regime change and calling for war instead of dialogue and negotiation, the Organization, the countries of our region and the rest of the international community raised their voices in a strong, firm and resolute manner to call for a halt to the war machinery, to the flow of weapons and to terrorist actions. We called for dialogue and negotiation to prevail over the imposition of force. It is extremely worrying to my country that conflicts are increasingly being resolved through the use of force by the great Powers and their armed wing, NATO. From the very start, the warmongering calls that we have heard over the past 15 months have undermined weak attempts at a peaceful settlement of the crises emerging in various parts of the Middle East and the Arab world and its surrounding areas.

Instead of supporting aggressive rhetoric, the role of the Organization and all its Members should always be to support efforts for peace, to keep channels of communication and dialogue open and not to isolate itself through partisan positions that alienate one of the parties to a conflict. True to the very essence of the United Nations, born from the ashes of the Second World War, calls emerging from the Organization should be for peace, not for war.

In that respect, Nicaragua resolutely condemns all those that have put their dangerous geopolitical ambitions ahead of ending violence through the provision of military and financial support to armed groups classified as terrorist groups by the Security Council. Such illicit activities affirm that any pretext or instrument are welcomed in seeking to impose a change of Government by force, irresponsibly encouraging public opposition, violating the Charter of the United Nations and threatening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its Member States.

Nicaragua urges that the joint efforts of Russia, China and former Secretary-General Kofi Annan be fully supported by the entire Organization and all its Members. We cherish the hope that such efforts will succeed and that reason and peace will prevail over force and war, the consequences of which could be devastating for the region and the world.

In that respect, I would like to end my statement by emphasizing that global peace can be maintained only if it is understood once and for all that the logic of interventionism and hegemony can never be the basis for a new world order in which true justice for all, free of double standards or double morals, prevails.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

**Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka): I join other speakers in commending you, Madam President, for convening this important debate.

The delegation of Sri Lanka associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The peace process in the Middle East is a matter of intrinsic interest to us all. The Secretary-General travelled to the region recently to see the situation on the ground for himself, and strongly encouraged the resumption of bilateral negotiations. We support and value his efforts. The Quartet envoys have continued to push on with their task, as has Jordan. Even though a just and durable solution to the situation in the Middle East continues to evade us, it is important to remain engaged. We hope that, even in the midst of doubts and frustrations, the parties will remain focused on the need to achieve an enduring peace and to explore all proposals on the main goals. We owe that to all the people of the region.

The settlement activities by Israel continue to be one of the main factors in the recurrence of violence in the region. The Quartet and the wider international community have repeatedly called for a freeze of settlement activity and an end to the demolition of Palestinian homes. As the Under-Secretary-General said in his briefing on 28 February (see S/PV.6725), incidents of settler violence against Palestinians continue in the West Bank. We hope that the settlement activity, which is a key source of human suffering and continuing friction in the occupied territories, and the resentment fuelling the conflict will be brought to an end, consistent with obligations under international law and in line with the wishes of the wider international community and, of course, this body. The law on that matter is very clear: settlements in the occupied territories are not legal.

Tolerance and understanding must be the key to peaceful coexistence in the Middle East, which is dotted with many religious sites that are holy to Muslims, Jews and Christians. We encourage all parties to exercise the utmost restraint for the sake of the civilians and for the greater goal of a lasting peace.

We have often stated that the political unity and economic advancement of the Palestinian people will contribute to the viability of the two-State solution. In that regard, it is notable that the President of the Palestinian Authority and the leader of Hamas recently agreed to form a transitional Government of technocrats. We also look forward to the Palestinian legislative and presidential elections.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts by international donors, regional organizations and United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians, especially children. We also strongly urge the occupying authorities to lift the restrictions on access and egress to Gaza for persons and goods. That will significantly contribute to the economic stability of Gaza.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Sri Lanka's support for a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Palestinian issue, and call for the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to statehood and the attainment of a two-State solution.

Sri Lanka supports Palestine's application for admission to full membership of the United Nations. It is our hope that it will also receive this body's favourable consideration. We also call for the restoration of the Golan to Syria and the occupied Lebanese lands to Lebanon.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

**Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh): Let me begin by thanking you, Madam President, for steering this very important open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I also convey our appreciation to Under-

Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his insightful and comprehensive briefing this morning.

I also wish to state that the delegation of Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, I wish briefly to make certain points that Bangladesh believes to be of importance.

A sustainable resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the issue of Palestine, which is the core of the long-lasting crisis, must be our collective strategic objective. All Member States should pledge complete commitment to that objective and throw their full moral, diplomatic, political and economic support behind its early realization. In that connection, we continue to encourage the efforts of Jordan to ensure peace between Palestine and Israel. Allow me to highlight some of the recent developments following our last quarterly debate on the issue (see S/PV.6706).

The Quartet last met on 11 April. However, there has been little progress towards meeting the timeline set out by the Quartet on 23 September 2011 for an agreement by the end of 2012. In particular, the deadline for parties to engage in direct negotiations and to exchange proposals for border and security arrangements by 26 January was missed. Only the Palestinian Authority submitted the requested proposals. IN that regard, we stress the need for the Quartet to adopt a clear position on the 1967 borders, including East Jerusalem, as one of the parameters for direct negotiations. Let me urge the Quartet also to ease the financial burden of the Palestinian Authority. There should be renewed commitments to increase financial assistance to Palestine.

It is encouraging to note that United States President Barack Obama phoned Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on 19 March, reaffirming the United States commitment to the peace process and the Quartet objectives.

On 27 March, Special Coordinator Robert Serry briefed the Council (see S/PV.6742), reporting that prospects for direct negotiations remained slim, and that without a political horizon, the State-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority were at risk.

On 22 March, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution establishing an independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of Israeli settlements for the rights of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. We hope that the mission will be granted due access to the occupied territories.

One of the disturbing elements of the Israel-Palestine conflict is Israel's utterance that it would not negotiate with a Palestinian Government that includes Hamas, although on 6 February Hamas and Fatah agreed on an interim Government, led by President Abbas, that would prepare for presidential and parliamentary elections.

We are afraid that progress on implementing the agreement will be slow as a result of such declarations. Instead of a pick-and-choose mentality, respect for democratically elected representatives should be the norm across nations.

It is also disheartening to note the dim prospects for Palestine's application for United Nations membership. The application was in effect put on the shelf after the Admissions Committee reported that it had been unable to reach a unanimous recommendation.

The situation of the approximately 4,400 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centres, 300 of whom are under administrative detention, also remains a cause of worry for those who believe in human rights and the fairness of justice, in particular as some detainees have continued to protest their situation through hunger strikes. Those detained must either be charged and face trial with judicial guarantees or released without delay. The human rights of those detainees should be honoured.

We believe that the best guides for achieving a two-State solution are, inter alia, the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the principle of land for peace, the Madrid Conference terms of reference, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Achieving a lasting solution in the Middle East, we believe, will guarantee the State of Israel its national security and peace. However, achieving that goal will require Israel's complete and unconditional withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Finally, let me reiterate Bangladesh's full support for a lasting peace for all inhabitants of the region, both Arabs and Israelis, and our strong commitment to

the realization of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side and in peace and harmony with all its neighbours.

**The President**: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

**Mr. Diallo** (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to address the Council. I should like also to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the outstanding manner in which you have been guiding the Council's work during the month of April 2012.

The Palestinian question is becoming increasingly urgent as a major challenge to the world's conscience. Those who think they can ignore it may well face a rude awakening, given the growing deterioration of the situation, both on the ground and politically.

As settlements continue to undermine efforts towards a two-State solution, the recent launching of projects and bidding for the construction of 1,121 residential structures is the latest instalment in the vicious circle of Israeli decision-making, which has dashed the tentative hopes of those who are intent on achieving a negotiated solution. Our Committee therefore calls upon the Security Council to act resolutely in order to put an end to the construction of settlements in Palestinian territory and to dismantle them. We support the fact-finding mission recently authorized by the Human Rights Council for that purpose, and we call for a revitalization of the work of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

This major concern is exacerbated by the fact that the peace process has stalled, despite the exploratory contacts made in Amman under Jordanian auspices. While the setting for this enduring scene in the diplomatic repertoire may vary with the circumstances, the story, unfortunately, does not change at all.

Furthermore, the serious financial crisis affecting the Palestinian Authority could stymie the progress already made in its State-building efforts, unless an outpouring of donor generosity can counter the policy of economic strangulation it is facing. In addition, the agreement on intra-Palestinian reconciliation signed in Doha should be implemented, and Palestine's application for membership in the United Nations should be given proper and fair consideration.

It is easy to understand the deep frustration of the Palestinian leaders, who cannot continue to accept the unbearable status quo indefinitely. The international community must therefore take bold and urgent action to break the deadlock while the two-State solution can still be salvaged. In addition, the Quartet and its regional partners must remain firmly resolved to enforce the deadline set for the end of 2012 to reach the long-awaited agreement. We therefore call upon the parties to return to the negotiating table, on the basis of the guarantees clearly set out by the Quartet for a final settlement based on the 1967 borders and minimal confidence-building measures, including a complete halt to settlement activities, the lifting of the blockade against Gaza and the release of Palestinian political prisoners.

The Committee, for its part, has continued to make a constructive contribution to achieving our shared aim of having two States living in peace and security. In February, we convened in Cairo the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People with a view to examining the cost of the Israeli occupation. It was clearly shown that once there is an end to the occupation, which costs at least $7 billion a year, the Palestinian State will be economically independent and will not become an assisted State or a bankrupt one.

The United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held in Geneva in April, afforded an opportunity to review the humanitarian and legal aspects of the critical problem of Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli prisons. It is abundantly clear that no agreement will be possible unless a just solution is found that will result in the release of the 4,400 such prisoners. For that reason, various remedies have been considered, including appeals to the International Court of Justice and the General Assembly to have them determine the status of those prisoners under the Geneva Conventions, and the sending of a United Nations fact-finding mission to investigate the conditions of their detention. Indeed, this problem — which remains in the headlines, as we recently saw when 1,200 prisoners began a hunger strike — will require the constant attention of the

United Nations, and in particular of the Security Council.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

**Mr. Jónasson** (Iceland): These are disturbing times in the Middle East. The situation in Syria remains of great concern, and we call on all parties to do their utmost to ensure that the Annan peace plan will succeed. The international community, as well as the actors on the ground, must do all they can to prevent further conflict in Syria, while at the same time taking steps towards achieving permanent peace. These steps must necessarily address the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Syrian people.

I will focus my statement on the question of Palestine, which Iceland would like to see receiving more attention by the Security Council.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be a core issue for peace and security in the Middle East. The changes we are seeing in the region must include a solution to the conflict; only by addressing this core problem can we expect changes to bring sustainable peace. Continued and accelerated settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, remain the main obstacle to peace. The request for the settlement activities to end cannot be called a precondition. These are illegal actions, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. According to the Convention, all parties are obliged to ensure respect for the Convention in all circumstances. This is a question not only of politics; it is a question of upholding international humanitarian law. Iceland therefore welcomes the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council in Geneva on conducting an international investigation into the settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. We urge Israel to cooperate with the fact-finding team.

We encourage the members of the Security Council to accept the invitation of President Abbas to visit the occupied Palestinian territory at the earliest convenience. Such a visit would give members a chance to see for themselves the situation on the ground and how the settlements, the wall, the roadblocks and checkpoints, the separate road system for settlers and so on are systematically cementing the occupation and seriously undermining the two-State solution. By accepting the invitation, the Security Council would demonstrate its willingness to study the situation first hand.

At the moment, it seems that all avenues are closed to the Palestinians. Their membership application to the United Nations has been vetoed beforehand. They have demonstrated their willingness to negotiate on the basis of international law and the Road Map, but negotiations are a difficult sell with settlement activities continuing unabated. A draft resolution on the settlements was vetoed last year, and Palestinians continue to be illegally displaced from their homes.

The current situation reflects very badly on the international community, and the Security Council should renew its commitment to settling the conflict and inform the rest of the membership on how it intends to proceed. Palestinians are yearning for freedom and dignity. They are looking to the United Nations to help them realize their right to self-determination and freedom from occupation. Iceland fully supports the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and reiterates its call on the Security Council to recommend to the General Assembly that Palestine be accepted as the 194th State Member of the United Nations.

**The President**: I give the floor to the representative of Norway.

**Mr. Wetland** (Norway): The absence of resumed real peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians is not tenable. Both parties have responsibilities to achieve a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the Middle East. Hostilities directed against civilians in southern Israel continue from the Gaza Strip and Sinai. This is totally unacceptable. Nevertheless, the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank persists and is presently the most severe impediment to peace.

Israel has to respond to the international community's continuous call for compliance with international law and to abide by its international obligations. We cannot accept the encirclement of East Jerusalem by settlements, which is cutting off any future capital of a Palestinian State and fragmenting the Palestinian territory. Israeli settlements are illegal under international and Israeli law and should be demolished, as ruled by the Israeli High Court.

Current actions on the ground are not compatible with the peace negotiations for the achievement of a two-State solution to the conflict. These unlawful and unilateral acts aimed at changing the situation on the ground and pre-empting the outcome of negotiations simply must stop. Both the territory and the borders are to be decided through negotiations, as are other final status issues.

The settlement expansion is currently inciting the Palestinian side to respond by internationalizing the conflict. It is also increasingly provoking public opinion and contributes to isolating Israel within the region and beyond. European leaders are constantly being asked why nothing is being done to hold Israel accountable. This threatens the stability of the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian State-building efforts. It may trigger waves of uncontrolled unrest in the area and lead to a breakdown of the current security mechanisms.

The donor support group for the Palestinian territory met on 21 March in Brussels to address the challenges to the Palestinian economy. It called for increased budget support by donors to meet the anticipated deficit in the recurrent budget. It also called on both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to implement improvements in the tax collection and transfer mechanism. The donor group also called for increased economic access for Palestinian authorities and investors in the area that is still under Israeli administration, which constitutes around 43 per cent of the West Bank.

Important progress has been made in facilitating the import of goods to Gaza, thereby improving living conditions. However, more needs to be done if Gaza is to realize its full economic and social potential. Within the framework of resolution 1860 (2009), further steps should be taken to lift the closure while taking security challenges into account.

Finally, I should like to say a few words on Syria. The cessation of violence remains incomplete. The discredited Syrian authorities must immediately withdraw their security forces and heavy weapons back from populated areas to the barracks. Norway fully supports Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan's efforts to stop the bloodshed in Syria and to facilitate a political transition towards democracy. We welcome the adoption of resolution 2043 (2012) and the deployment of up to 300 military observers and civilian experts to monitor the full implementation of Mr. Annan's six-point proposal. We hope that these efforts will contribute positively and create conditions for a meaningful political transition in Syria.

**The President**: I give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

**Mr. Laram** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and on your successful leadership, especially with respect to the progress achieved on the situation in Syria.

I also thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing this morning.

I offer my deep condolences to the Government and people of Pakistan on last week's air disaster.

No matter what happens in the Middle East, the question of Palestine remains the central issue affecting peace and security in the region. The final months of last year saw new momentum emerge towards an agreement between the Israeli and Palestinian parties in the wake of the statement issued in September 2011 by the Quartet, in which it proposed a time line for re-activating negotiations between the two sides to reach an agreement by late 2012 that would address the salient issues. This led to a return to negotiations after a long pause as exploratory talks began under the commendable auspices of Jordan.

The Palestinian side has shown the desire to engage in direct, serious and productive negotiations. In response to a Quartet request, Palestinians demonstrated vision, in all negotiating rounds, to resolve the two most prominent issues, namely, borders and security. The Palestinian position was made clear at the highest level in a letter sent last week by President Mahmoud Abbas to his Israel counterpart. That letter reaffirmed the principles of the peace process, which are known and acknowledged by everyone, and stressed the commitment of the Palestinians both to those principles and to national unity, so as to ensure respect for agreements signed by Israel. The letter also explained how Israeli practices aimed at stripping the Palestinian Authority of its powers. On the other hand, the Israeli side did not provide anything in writing, merely declaring its

determination to retain control of the Jordan Valley and the eastern border.

On the ground, the Israeli Government has continued to expand settlements at a significant pace, even after the meetings at Amman began. The international community has spoken with one voice about the seriousness of the continuation of settlements on the peace process, as it undermines the two-State solution by imposing a fait accompli that makes it impossible to build a viable Palestinian State in the territory occupied by Israel in 1967, including East Jerusalem. That renders negotiations meaningless and pointless and serves to emphasize the absence of sincere intentions on the part of the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, to achieve peace. One is inevitably led to the entirely objective conclusion that the Israeli side bears full responsibility for the failure of the talks and the freezing of negotiations, and therefore for the standstill in the peace process.

Against that backdrop, we reiterate our demand for the countries sponsoring the proposed Quartet solution that believe in such a negotiated solution to bring to bear the political pressure necessary to ensure the success of that endeavour. We also call for support for the latest resolution of the Human Rights Council, which called for the deployment of an independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the repercussions of Israeli settlements on Palestinian rights.

While the international community remains unanimous about the basic aspects of an ultimate solution — a two-State solution — insisting that the Palestinian request that it be recognized as an independent State be rejected does a disservice to such a solution. We should like to take this opportunity to renew our call on States that have not yet recognized Palestine to do so. We also call on the Security Council not to obstruct the Palestinian demand for full membership of the United Nations, given that such recognition could contribute to the achievement of a peaceful, comprehensive, just and sustainable resolution of the issue.

We would like to reiterate that a solution to the crisis in the Middle East is contingent upon Israel's withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territories, the occupied Syrian Golan and the remaining Lebanese territory occupied by Israel. A solution also depends upon Israel's cessation of violations of Lebanese sovereignty, including all ongoing violations of international law and international legitimacy, as set out in the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, especially resolution 1701 (2006). Nevertheless, Israel has not stopped violating that resolution — by violating Lebanese sovereignty in various ways, most recently by building a road in the occupied Lebanese Shaba'a farmlands.

The question of Jerusalem continues to be a primary concern of the peoples of the Arab and Islamic world, who are worried about the Israeli authorities' escalation of illegal measures aimed at the Judaization of occupied Jerusalem. The International Conference on Jerusalem was held last February in Doha on the initiative of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, who emphasized that Jerusalem, with its mosques and churches, will remain an Islamic and Christian Arab city. He also stressed that Israelis do not realize that there is no Palestinian State without Jerusalem, and no Jerusalem without the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He also urged the international community to express its rejection of attempts by the Israeli Government to desecrate the sanctity of Islamic and Christian Holy Sites, to demolish homes in the city and expel its Arab population, and to withdraw the identity documents of its inhabitants so as to Judaize Jerusalem. Such attempts are in violation of the obligations of Israel, the occupying Power, under international law. They also run counter to the relevant United Nations resolutions, in addition to undermining the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Since the outbreak of the peaceful uprising of the brotherly Syrian people, in March 2011, the State of Qatar has expressed its deep concern about what is happening in a dear brotherly Arab country, and demanded that the bloodshed among the Syrian people and violations of fundamental freedoms and human rights stop. The State of Qatar has strived to play a positive role to resolve the crisis in a way that spares the country future disasters. However, the Syrian authorities unfortunately decided from day one to resort to a repressive solution entailing killing, detention and torture, in the hope of extinguishing demonstrations. They also described unarmed demonstrators as armed and terrorist groups. As a result, some in Syria have had to resort to self-defence,

which is a legitimate right, especially given that it was in reaction to the negative acts of the Syrian authorities.

The State of Qatar has repeatedly emphasized the cohesion and unity of the Syrian people and the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of sisterly Syria and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. As we have supported the efforts of the Arab League to resolve the crisis, we continue today to support the efforts exerted by the international community, led by the efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the Arab League. Those efforts are based primarily on the Arab plan of action adopted by the Arab League on 22 January.

We also support the implementation of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), on the deployment of an observer mission to Syria. In that regard, we sincerely hope that the mission will succeed in its tasks. However, past experience has taught us that granting the Syrian authorities one opportunity after another only results in the Government reneging on its promises and continuing to savagely crack down on its people. Since the deadline to stop the violence on 10 April, the Government has continued to violate its obligations to maintaining military forces in population centres and by bombing cities with heavy weapons and even by helicopter.

The Syrian Government has also continued to arrest and torture people and to commit other abuses, confirming its non-compliance with any of the elements of the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy, as indicated in the letter that the Secretary-General addressed to the Council on 19 April (S/2012/238). None of that bodes well for the success of the Mission, and requires that the international community, including the Security Council, take firm action to protect the Syrian people in the event of non-compliance by the Syrian authorities with the provisions of resolution 2043 (2012), as well as all the provisions of the Annan plan as an integral unit, within a specific time frame.

In spite of all of that, we are consistent in calling for a peaceful solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and holds accountable all those involved in the killings and the violations of their rights, freedoms and dignity. To reach such a solution, the Syrian Government must commit to the immediate cessation of all acts of violence and killing, the protection of Syrian civilians, the withdrawal of military forces and the demilitarization of cities and villages, as well as to ensuring the freedom of peaceful demonstration and the immediate release of all those detained in such events and allowing the free entry and movement of the media, including the immediate admission of humanitarian assistance provided by Arab and international relief organizations.

The representatives of the Syrian authorities have directed several false accusations against my country, aimed at distorting the facts on the ground, in a desperate attempt to divert the attention of the international community from the terrible massacres being committed by those authorities against the brotherly Syrian people. We stood with Syria before the current crisis. Only an ungrateful party would deny that fact. Here we ask, is there any worse terrorism in the world than bombing homes, mosques and churches with tanks, mortars, artillery and airplanes?

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

**Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council to guide the Council's work for this month. We would like to thank you for inviting us to participate in this open public debate on the Middle East. I would also like to thank Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, for having presided over the work of the Council last month.

My delegation supports the statements made on behalf of the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Today more thank ever, the situation in the Middle East is characterized by a feeling of profound disappointment. That feeling is due to the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territory — the longest occupation that the world has seen since the United Nations was founded. The Palestinian people have placed great hope in the United Nations to save them from that painful experience and from their suffering. The Palestinian people are committed to peace and to the olive branch, but their hopes depend upon the Security Council. The Council must deal with the occupation in a serious and firm manner.

It is deplorable that the occupying Power is continuing its hostile practices, which are characterized by the expulsion of civilians, detaining people, torturing prisoners and expanding and building settlements. Just yesterday, in the middle of the day, Israel expelled two Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem, while more building permits were granted to settlers. The aim is simply to Judaize Jerusalem and to enshrine the status quo for the Jewish inhabitants of the city.

Israel is also rejecting the work of the Quartet, in particular with regard to the Quartet's statement of 11 April (see SG/2182), which, in and of itself, does not meet the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Saudi Arabia, which has responsibility for the holy places in Medina and Mecca, is very closely following those attacks against East Jerusalem, and in particular against Haram Al-Sharif. Saudi Arabia is very concerned. There have been many attempts to violate that site, undermine its foundations, burn it and demolish it. We call attention to Israel's plan to step up its destruction and to increase the size of settlements.

The League of Arab States has endorsed the Initiative put forward by Saudi Arabia to bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects, including by putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, the Shaba'a farmlands and the remaining Lebanese territory. We seek to establish a Palestinian State. Although it has been broadly accepted by the international community, Israel has rejected the Initiative.

We urge the Council to go beyond these routine debates and to take the measures necessary to end the blockade of Gaza, dismantle the settlements, bring an end to the occupation and recognize an independent Palestinian State, on Palestinian land, in line with the 4 June 1967 borders, with its capital in Jerusalem. We urge the Council to accept Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations and of its agencies — a matter on which the Council has been very dilatory. We hope that the Palestinian people and the world will have to wait no longer to attain justice from the Council.

I would now like to refer to the Iranian occupation of the three islands that belong to the United Arab Emirates, namely, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. That occupation is a factor fuelling Iranian threats against the Arab Gulf States. The visit of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the islands of the United Arab Emirates was unacceptable and showed a lack of good intentions. We support the United Arab Emirates in its efforts to resolve this problem peaceably through negotiation, arbitration and mediation. We call upon Iran to preserve its good neighbourly relations, cooperate with the United Arab Emirates and display wisdom in addressing this issue.

With regard to Syria, we supported the adoption of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), concerning the deployment of a United Nations Mission to monitor developments. We have also supported the initiative to send Mr. Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and of the League of Arab States, whose efforts we fully support. We call attention to the fact that the Syrian Government is nevertheless continuing its violence against its own people, using heavy weapons to attack population centres, including towns and villages.

Instead of prisoners being released, people continue to be detained. It is clear that the Syrian Government is not respecting the commitments it made to the international community through Mr. Annan. It is high time for the Syrian Government to put an end to the use of weapons against its own people. The aspirations and resolve of the people will prevail. Repression and violence no longer have a place in the modern world.

We urge the Security Council to ensure that the Syrian authorities are not able to delay any further and that Syria is no longer able to continue to ignore its commitments, as it has with regard to the League of Arab States Initiative. The Council cannot give the Syrian authorities additional deadlines at the expense of the lives of the women, children and young people of Syria.

The world is watching events closely in the Middle East. The international community, as represented by the Security Council, is called upon to uphold international law and to heed the aspirations of the people of the Middle East to justice, freedom and national independence.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We listened with interest to the briefing given to the Security Council by

Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela associates itself with the statement made by Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People recently heard a statement from Ms. Hanan Ashrawi, an outstanding representative of that people, in which she told the Committee that the window for building a Palestinian-Israeli peace based on a two-State solution was rapidly closing owing to the voracity of the State of Israel, which chooses expansionism and repression over respect for human rights and international law.

The State of Israel engages in a regime of exclusion. Discriminatory laws proliferate. Communication channels reserved for the exclusive use of settlers, different rules for settlements on the one hand and Palestinian villages on the other, deliberate policies to abandon the Palestinian people to violent attacks by settlers, segregationist controls and checkpoints and arbitrary arrests of children, the elderly and women — all of those are inhuman practices on the part of a State that, paradoxically, calls itself a democracy. There is no democracy when laws, policies and the use of force privilege one group over another, enforcing religious and ethnic separatism, and when a people is subjected to oppression, exploitation and discrimination, as is the heroic Palestinian people.

It is imperative to put an end to the Palestinian tragedy by effectuating a peace that is comprehensive, lasting and, above all, fair. Unfortunately, we currently have a global power structure that, by abusive use of imperialist military force, transgresses the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

Israel, the occupying Power, means to impose perpetual humiliation on the Palestinian people. The whole world calls out to the Security Council to implement the relevant resolutions on the Palestinian situation. Venezuela also reiterates the importance of convening, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, a conference of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, with a view to identifying ways to ensure compliance with the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

The Security Council remains indifferent to the systemic violations by the State of Israel of international law, particularly international humanitarian law and human rights law. Why such impunity? Why such inaction by the Council? We deplore the fact that, because of the complicity of one political and military Power, all resolutions on the Palestinian question are ignored.

In that context, the urgent need is clear to move towards a new international order, genuinely based on the legal equality of States, and in which the fundamental principles of international law prevail. Venezuela reiterates its support for recognizing the Palestinian State as a full Member of the United Nations.

Current attempts to violate the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic are causes for concern. Syria's legitimate aspirations to regain control of the Golan Heights are eclipsed in favour of Israel's expansionist agenda in the Middle East. It is painful and regrettable to see the deplorable conflict afflicting the Syrian people — a people who love peace and nobly defend their sovereignty and right to self-determination. We are optimistic about the facilitating work of the Joint Special Envoy for the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Kofi Annan. The Council must contribute unambiguously to the implementation of the six-point plan he has proposed, which was welcomed by the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad.

We support a ceasefire and a political and peaceful solution, through dialogue, to the conflict in Syria, in order to move towards democratic reforms without interventions imposed by imperialist interests. My country recognizes the efforts made by the Syrian Government to promote such reforms.

We hope that resolution 2043 (2012), adopted on 21 April, establishing the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria — which is to be composed of unarmed military observers and which has been welcomed by the Syrian Government — will contribute to overcoming the crisis. The quest for peace must never be abandoned. However, it is troubling that Kofi Annan's facilitation work and peace efforts by some countries are intentionally being undermined. The warmongers do not want peace in Syria; rather, they want regime change, which, if it were to materialize, would destabilize the Middle East and encourage the

State of Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms that the Syrian people has the right to decide its destiny democratically and without intervention. We believe that the Government of President Bashar Al-Assad is the legitimate representative of its people.

We also condemn the ongoing violations of Lebanese sovereignty and the recurring violations of resolution 1701 (2006).

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of all nations and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Khazaee** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me, first, to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, as well as to thank you for having convened this open debate on the situation in the Middle East.

It is with deep concern and growing frustration that we continue to endlessly address the situation in the Middle East, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Regrettably, the illegal policies and the constant provocations and incitement by the Israeli regime and its extremist settlers against the Palestinian people, their land and their holy places continue to exacerbate tensions and raise religious sensitivities, risking further destabilization and tension on the ground. An extremely worrying development in that regard is the continuing illegal activity in the vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Qubbat Al-Sakhra, in occupied Jerusalem, in which Israeli occupying forces continue to storm the holy compound and to use force against hundreds of Palestinian worshippers, in particular during and after Friday prayer. According to reports, Israeli occupying forces utilize tear gas, throw grenades, deploy sound bombs and shoot rubber bullets at the worshippers, causing fear and panic among them.

The Security Council and the world community must pay heed to the escalation of tension and confrontation in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque, since that holy place, along with other Muslim and Christian holy sites in occupied Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, continue to be subjected to threats, incitement and desecration by extremist settlers, as well as constant provocation by Zionist officials. That has led to escalating concern — not only among the Palestinian people but among Muslim people around the world — with respect to the potential for further crisis at that holy site.

Another source of extreme worry is the expansion of illegal settlements, which continues to take place on an unprecedented scale, with the number of housing units being built in the West Bank having grown to thousands during 2011 and the first quarter of 2012. The eventual construction of thousands of housing units will almost certainly change the geopolitical reality on the ground. In addition to the unabated expansion of settlements, Palestinian buildings and residences in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem are being demolished. Furthermore, the expansion of settlements has been accompanied by a systematic increase in settler violence against Palestinians and their property. The result of those activities is the continued suffering of the Palestinian people. While morally wrong, the settlements are also illegal under international law, as they violate article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and run contrary to the obligations of the Israeli regime. In that connection, the Islamic Republic of Iran supports the action taken by the Non-Aligned Movement to request Switzerland, in its capacity as depositary of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, to convene, at the earliest opportunity, a conference of the high contracting parties to the Convention, for the purpose of upholding the obligations and responsibilities incumbent upon the high contracting parties in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. That is in accordance with recommendations contained in General Assembly resolutions 64/10 and 64/254.

The situation in Gaza is no better than that in the West Bank. In the past couple of months, the Gaza Strip has witnessed bombardment and attacks by the Israeli regime. Many civilians, including women and children, were targeted, and several houses were destroyed. The deprivation of more than 1.5 million Palestinians of the basic necessities, including fuel for electricity, continues. Thus far, the calls of the world community, including the United Nations, to stop the illegal activities continue to fall on deaf ears, as the Israeli regime continues with its systematic violation of human rights.

The Israeli regime must be held accountable for all those war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. There is no justification for the Council to remain silent vis-à-vis the perpetrators of those crimes. The international community has the responsibility to act and to put an end to the deliberate violation of human and humanitarian rights.

It is our earnest desire that the prolonged conflict in the occupied lands of Palestine should give way to lasting peace and prosperity. That, of course, requires the concerted effort of the entire international community for the restoration of peace and justice.

With respect to the situation in Syria, although we are of the belief that the crisis in that country has no relevance to the agenda at hand, since some delegations have touched on the issue, I would like to say that my country continues to follow closely developments in Syria. We firmly believe that the current crisis should be resolved only through a Syrian-led political dialogue in a peaceful manner. About two weeks ago, Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan visited Iran and met Iranian high officials, who assured him of Iran's support for his mission and expressed Iran's deep concern over the regional consequences of any violations of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are happy that the Syrian Government is constructively and actively engaged with Mr. Annan's mission and that it has taken positive steps in compliance with his plan. On our part, we are also interacting with some of the major players in the region in the effort to ensure constructive and successful United Nations involvement in defusing the tension and restoring peace in Syria.

With regard to the baseless allegation levelled by the representative of Israel against the peaceful nature of our nuclear activities, it is not my intention to delve into a detailed response to such allegations. However, suffice it for me to say that the Israeli regime's clandestine development and unlawful possession of hundreds of nuclear warheads and a nuclear-weapons arsenal is a threat to the region as well as to international peace and security. The Israeli regime has clearly defied the demand of the overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations, which have time and again called on it to renounce nuclear weapons and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Regrettably, the inaction of the relevant United Nations organs in dealing with such Israeli policies and practices has emboldened that dangerous regime. The question remains how to establish peace and stability in the Middle East when the massive Israeli arsenal continues to pose a threat in the region and beyond.

Finally, the representative of Saudi Arabia made reference to the visit to Abu Musa of His Excellency President Ahmadinejad of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In that regard, I should say that the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb are an integral and eternal part of Iranian territory. We categorically reject any claim to the contrary. Moreover, the President's recent visit, and all other measures taken by the Iranian authorities in those Iranian islands, was based fully on Iran's sovereign rights and on the principle of its territorial integrity as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law. We underline here the importance of the brotherly and good neighbourly relations that exist between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the neighbouring countries in the Persian Gulf. The countries of the region share a common interest in security and long-term stability. Our continued commitment to brotherly relations with our neighbours and regional partners in the areas of security and economic development has a regional perspective as well. We believe that constructive negotiation between Iran and the United Arab Emirates will lead to the further expansion of relations in various fields and that it will help to remove any misunderstanding on that issue.

**Mr. Sin Son Ho** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Allow me, first of all, Madam President, to acknowledge your convening of this open debate of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

My delegation expects that today's meeting will help bring about a practical resolution of the Palestinian issue as soon as possible. We wish to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his comprehensive overview of the current state of the Palestinian question.

We would also like to express our full support for the statement made by His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, has been unanimously called for by the international community. To that end, many resolutions have been adopted in the United Nations and various proposals, including the Arab Peace Initiative, have been put on the table, but the prospects for success remain unclear.

The Israeli military occupation of Palestine and East Jerusalem continues, as it does in other Arab territories, and its settlement activities in particular are expanding, posing a challenge to the international community. The result has been a deadlocked peace process and serious difficulties for, and threats to, peace and security in the Middle East. This year alone, the Israeli bombing in the Gaza Strip and its continuing merciless use of force have killed many innocent civilians, including women and children. The situation in Lebanon and in the occupied Syrian Golan is the same. That is entirely due to their continued occupation by Israel and the prejudicial Middle East policies of the United States, which sides actively with the occupying Power. My delegation believes that the Security Council should give those high-priority issues the attention they deserve.

Establishing an independent State of Palestine is an inalienable sovereign right of the Palestinian people. We must put an end to the Israeli military occupation and to the violations of human rights in Palestine as soon as possible, in order to allow the Palestinian people to exercise their full right to national self-determination. The peace process between Palestine and Israel should be carried out on the basis of those principles.

It is also my delegation's position that the Security Council should pay due attention to the issue of Palestinian membership of the United Nations, which is on the international agenda, and make it a reality without further delay, now that more than 130 countries have officially recognized Palestinian statehood. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea recognized Palestine as an independent sovereign State in 1988, and since then has given its unreserved support and solidarity to the Palestinian people's struggle for statehood. In that regard, my delegation firmly reiterates our continuing support for the just cause of the Palestinian and Arab peoples.

My delegation takes this opportunity to clarify once again the principled position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that all disputes should be settled peacefully through dialogue and negotiation between the parties concerned, without interference from outside forces. In that connection, my delegation is of the view that the Syrian issue should also be resolved peacefully through dialogue, without any foreign intervention, in conformity with the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter, such as respect for sovereignty and non-interference.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

**Mr. Rishchynski** (Canada): Canada applauds the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to resolve the crisis in Syria. We welcome Syria's acceptance of his peace plan, but we want to see its words backed by actions. We are gravely concerned by the fact that violent incidents have continued since the ceasefire took effect, on 12 April, and we are disturbed by reports of Government forces firing on peaceful protesters, forcing United Nations observers to evacuate to safety.

Canada welcomes resolution 2043 (2012), unanimously adopted by the Security Council on Saturday, which authorizes a United Nations Mission to supervise the ceasefire. The presence of United Nations observers is vital to helping stabilize the situation on the ground. We encourage the Secretary-General to deploy the Mission as soon as he judges security conditions conducive to doing so.

We urge President Al-Assad to respect his commitments to the Joint Special Envoy, withdraw Syrian forces from populated areas, end the bloodshed and honour his agreement to allow the United Nations observers freedom of movement throughout the country, including in the war-torn city of Homs. We also call on the opposition to show restraint and respect the ceasefire.

(*spoke in French*)

Up until now, President Al-Assad has cynically exploited peace initiatives in order to stall for time, rather than taking the opportunity to end this crisis by acknowledging the legitimate demands of the Syrian people. It is time for all Security Council members in a position to influence Syria to urge him to fully honour his commitments to the Joint Special Envoy. If he does not, his lack of good faith will be clear to all, and the

Council should act decisively to end the bloodshed in Syria. Canada remains unwavering in our view that President Al-Assad must end the violence, relinquish power and enable a peaceful transition to a free and democratic Syria that respects the human rights of all its people, including religious and ethnic minorities.

Turning to Iran, Canada welcomes the leadership shown by the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany (P5+1) in opening discussions with Iran over its nuclear programme, and we acknowledge Iran's decision to engage in talks with the international community without preconditions. We view the first round of discussions between Iran and the P5+1 as a constructive first step towards addressing the international community's outstanding concerns regarding Iran's nuclear activities.

(*spoke in English*)

With all eyes now on the second round of that process, in late May, we urge Iran to engage in good faith and take meaningful steps towards complying with its international nuclear obligations. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons must form the basis of any eventual agreement between Iran and the international community. Iran's full compliance with its international nuclear obligations is the only measure that will lead to the easing of international sanctions against it. As Canada and others have stated before, implementing international sanctions is not a step we take lightly. Our desire is not to punish the Iranian people, but rather to persuade the Iranian leadership to abide by Iran's obligations.

Canada also remains concerned by the failure of the Iranian Government to take adequate steps to improve the human rights situation there. We continue to see reports of Iran's failure to live up to its domestic and international human rights obligations, particularly with respect to deficiencies in its judicial system. We will continue to work with the international community to ensure that the rights of the Iranian people are not forgotten or overshadowed by the nuclear issue.

Concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Canada remains wholly supportive of the Quartet's efforts and we welcome its recent attempts to encourage the parties to resume direct peace negotiations without delays or preconditions, in accordance with the Quartet's statement of 23 September 2011 (see SG/2178). We share the goal of a negotiated outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that can result in two States living side by side in peace and security.

The Quartet is calling on donors to step up to support the progress made to date by the Palestinian Authority to build State institutions and provide security. In that area, Canada remains committed to implementing its assistance package of $300 million over five years, in support of security and justice reforms by the Palestinian Authority. We commend the progress that has been made and encourage continued reforms.

Canada urges both parties to take further confidence-building measures, avoid unhelpful unilateral actions and combat violence and incitement to violence in order to create an atmosphere conducive to negotiating peace. We encourage both parties to stop debating about the negotiations and sit down at the table unconditionally and negotiate a final agreement. There is no viable alternative to a negotiated two-State solution.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin my statement by reading out a sentence from the statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs at the beginning of the meeting this morning. Mr. Pascoe said,

(*spoke in English*)

> "Achieving a full and sustained cessation of violence and seeking a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Syria is at the centre of our efforts in the Middle East."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

That statement contains substantive and procedural inaccuracies that highlight the fact that the Secretariat's representative does not fully understand the very essence of the item on today's agenda, namely, "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". When, only two days following the adoption of resolution 2043 (2012), the representative of the Secretary-General takes the view that putting an end to the violence in Syria is the priority under the agenda item, Mr. Pascoe has declared his intention. This is a very dangerous issue about which we cannot afford to remain silent.

There is a way to alter the truth and the nature of the agenda item. It should be recalled that the international community has agreed to address the need to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and on the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

My delegation remains concerned by the deliberate attempts that have been made by a number of delegations to divert the general discussion of the situation in the Middle East away from the original aims for which the agenda item was first established. It is regrettable that the Under-Secretary-General has chosen to follow that path — as it is that the Secretary-General has also chosen to do so — as seen in Mr. Pascoe's decision to begin his briefing by referring to the situation in Syria and focusing priority on internal developments there while ignoring the actual agenda item — "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" — which is intended to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories and to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict in keeping with the well-known peace plan.

The situation has become highly dangerous as a result of Israeli inflexibility, its systematic violation of the rights of Arab citizens living under its occupation, the country's refusal to implement hundreds of United Nations resolutions, and the crimes that have been perpetrated against Arabs in Syria and Palestine. Furthermore, the issue is an integral component of the very responsibilities of the Security Council to maintain international peace and security. Moreover, it is why the item was established and included in the agenda in the first place, where it has remained for decades without a solution. Some are trying to bury significant issues and conceal the failure of past attempts at finding solutions by including irrelevant internal problems in Security Council deliberations.

In that context, the aim of today's debate is to undermine the referential framework for the issue and its relationship with putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and the establishment of a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

It is regrettable that a number of Arab delegations have also undermined that framework and fallen into the trap of addressing issues that have nothing whatsoever to do with finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territory. Those Arabs have thereby participated unwittingly in the altering and undermining of the agenda item.

What is strangest of all in that context is that a number of States have demonstrated false enthusiasm for the rights of peoples and the protection of civil and human rights, shamefully and worryingly ignoring the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the need to put an end to the Israeli occupation. The subject at hand is the Israeli occupation, which has expanded and divided Palestinian territory into Areas A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H — all the way up to the letter T. Palestinian territories have become areas listed from A to Z, all of which are under occupation. Those same States see no wrong in the Israeli occupation stepping up its systematic campaign to kill Palestinian civilians, including women and children, in encouraging the fanatical settlement campaign — which is undermining attempts to establish a Palestinian State and achieve peace in the region — or in encouraging the destruction of holy sites.

As part of the same Israeli policy that flouts all relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, in particular resolution 497 (1981), which provides that the Israeli decision to annex the Syrian Golan is null and void and has no legal effect, Israel is continuing to refuse to return the occupied Syrian Golan to its motherland, Syria, and is pursuing its settlement policies, terrorist actions, acts of racial discrimination, attempts to humiliate Syrian citizens, divide the occupied Syrian Golan and build a separation wall in the Golan east of the village of Majdal Shams.

Moreover, this month, Israeli policy has prevented apple farmers from transporting their harvest to cities in Syria, even though the International Committee of the Red Cross sought to intervene in order to get permission for the trucks carrying the crop to enter Syria. The trucks waited for three months to obtain Israeli authorization, but the permits never came through. We attempted to convey our complaint to the Secretary-General and to the members of the Security Council through formal letters. However, those complaints have fallen on deaf ears.

The representatives of the Secretary-General have not contented themselves simply with ignoring Israel's violations. As Mr. Pascoe did today, they have simply

ignored the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan during their monthly briefings to the Security Council under this agenda item. They are clearly shirking their responsibilities and their duty under resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

This demonstrates a dreadful lack of a sense of duty on the part of the Secretariat to inform the Security Council of the latest developments in the occupied Syrian Golan. Failure to do so will encourage Israel to pursue its aggressive policies and its flagrant violations of all relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Even the customary phrases voiced by a number of the representatives of the Secretary-General, to the effect that there were no new developments in the occupied Golan, were not to be heard today in the statement of Mr. Pascoe, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. The Syrian Golan must fully returned within the borders of 4 June 1967. This is a non-negotiable right. We ask Israel not for concessions, as has been stated here, but to fully restored rights and lands to their owners.

Resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) call on all countries to respect their provisions. What is surprising is that only two days following the adoption of resolution 2042 (2012), the Emir of Qatar made a public statement violating the letter and spirit of that resolution. This clearly revealed the hidden intentions of the Qatari authorities, who are opposed to any peaceful settlement to the crisis in Syria. Indeed, the Emir of Qatar had already made his judgements and appraisals prior to the arrival of the United Nations monitors. He said,

> "The likelihood of the successful outcome of Annan's mission is no higher than 3 per cent. The Syrian people do not need peaceful support. What they need is military support through arms."

These remarks were made by the Emir of Qatar just one day after the Council adopted resolution 2042 (2012). The Qatari authorities continued to use such destructive language before and following the adoption of the resolution in New York and participated in the Istanbul meetings, as well as those in Tunis and Paris. In that regard, we wish to recall that it was Qatar that, in cooperation with Saudi Arabia, terminated the mission of the League of Arab States to Syria. Having been relieved of its responsibilities and duties, the mission unmasked the policies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which continue to support and finance armed terrorist groups and to promote terrorism and the shedding of Syrian blood.

The Saudi authorities do not hesitate periodically to kill peaceful demonstrators in Al-Qatif and Al-Awamiya or to cordon off areas where there are demonstrations in an attempt to intimidate and cow civilians. More than 30,000 political detainees currently crowd Saudi prisons. In addition to carrying out arbitrary arrests and violating the freedoms of movement and peaceful expression, some Saudi sheikhs have issued religious edicts authorizing those who participate in such peaceful demonstrations to be killed.

I do not wish to go into greater detail because I would thereby fall into the very trap that the representatives of a number of other Member States have fallen into. As to the Western countries that have criticized the human rights situation in my country, it is they that are to blame for the deterioration of that situation, as it is their Governments that have imposed unjust economic measures that have had a devastating impact on the daily lives and livelihoods of Syrian citizens.

Instead, they choose to criticize and blame the Syrian Government for the lack of commodities and essential foodstuffs for its citizens. It is regrettable that the Governments of Saudi Arabia and Qatar have participated enthusiastically in the imposition of these shameful measures, and that their tireless efforts have exacerbated the situation of some of the poorest and weakest sectors in Syria. With regard to the humanitarian situation, contrary to international public opinion, the activities of terrorist groups financed and protected by Qatar and Saudi Arabia persist, as highlighted by their own media.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Apakan** (Turkey): Finding a comprehensive and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a requirement for stability, security and endurable peace in the Middle East. The status quo is not viable. At a time when the whole region is undergoing a structural reformation, the conflict cannot remain at a standstill.

During the past three months, when the focus has remained mainly on developments in Syria, settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories have

continued unabated. Such activities obstruct the revitalization of the peace process and seriously endanger the vision of a two-State solution, thus destroying the basis of the prospects for peace.

The efforts of the Israeli authorities to legitimize the settlements in the context of Israeli law do not alter that fact. Moreover, at its most recent meeting on 11 April, the Quartet called not only for an end to settlement activities and settler violence but also for the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank. In any case, resort to violence by any party can in no way be tolerated as a way to overcome existing disputes.

The situation of Palestinian prisoners inside Israeli prisons also needs urgent attention. The keeping under arrest of elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council remains of significant concern. Such policies of Israel raise further doubts regarding its sincerity towards the peace process.

We deplore the dangerous escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip in recent months due to Israel's attacks. Israel's disproportionate and indiscriminate retaliatory moves, causing civilian casualties and injuries, cannot be accepted. I also recall the grave situation of housing, health and other primary services in Gaza, and reiterate our call for the lifting of the illegal embargo.

The international community must ensure that there is accountability, both for the blockade and for Israel's attack on the international humanitarian aid flotilla on the high seas. In such circumstances, we hope that the letter sent last week by President Abbas to Prime Minister Netanyahu can pave the way for sincere progress in the Middle East process. We hope that Israel will seize the opportunity and contribute to building a constructive atmosphere.

Concurrently, Turkey will continue to promote efforts towards achieving unity in Palestine. Palestinian national reconciliation is of critical importance in terms of ensuring comprehensive and sustainable peace and stability. For that reason, the reconciliation to be concluded by and the holding of free, fair and transparent elections in Palestine should be supported without prejudice by all members of the international community.

I would also like to refer to the grave situation in Syria, which is yet another factor of instability in the region. We attribute the utmost importance to the immediate, visible, verifiable and indisputable implementation of resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), including all aspects of the six-point plan of the Joint Special Envoy, Mr. Kofi Annan, which has offered a promising window of opportunity. We hope that the Syrian Government shall immediately take all the necessary steps. We call for an immediate end to the violence. In this respect, the primary responsibility rests with the Syrian Government. Turkey, together with other members of the international community, will continue to follow closely the developments in Syria.

Turkey has, from the beginning, taken sides with the democratic aspirations of the peoples of the Middle East in their struggle for a better life and to live in societies where human rights receive due respect, the rule of law prevails, and the people take part in the shaping of their destiny. It is our view that this same principle must apply to the aspirations of the Palestinians, which should not go unanswered any longer. The Palestinian people must, as soon as possible, be able to fully exercise their inalienable rights in accordance with the numerous United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. Palestinians must attain their goal of an independent State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace.

Turkey welcomes and strongly supports the Palestinian application for full-fledged United Nations membership submitted by President Mahmoud Abbas on 23 September 2011, and believes that it is high time for Palestine to take its rightful place in the international arena among the community of nations.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Mr. Núñez Mosquera** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We consider this meeting to be very timely, given the deplorable situation that continues to prevail in the Middle East. The deterioration of the situation since the last time that the Security Council met to consider this topic (see S/PV.6706) is evident. The Middle East remains marked by instability and insecurity.

Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories remains the main obstacle to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution for the region. Israel must immediately end its illegal presence in the Palestinian territories that it occupies, ignoring

the calls of the international community. It must cease building settlements in occupied Palestine. It must put an end to its attacks and the indiscriminate use of military force against the civilian Palestinian population, and unconditionally and fully lift the cruel and illegal blockade of Gaza.

Cuba reiterates its support for Palestine's bid for full membership of the United Nations. The Security Council must pronounce itself without further delay in favour of this matter, as it is the clear desire of the overwhelming majority of the States Members of this Organization. If this bid has been unsuccessful to date, that is because of the threat of veto by one of the permanent members of the Security Council, despite the fact that the State of Palestine has already been formally recognized by over 130 countries from all the regions of the world.

The situation and humiliations of the more than 4,000 Palestinian political prisoners are unacceptable. What is the Security Council going to do about this situation? Why has this body not condemned the situation immediately and clearly?

Cuba reiterates its rejection of the illegal building and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, which are violations of international law, the Charter and United Nations resolutions. We reiterate our unconditional support for the just demands and the right of Syria to reinstate its full sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan.

Cuba rejects the policies of interference and destabilization in the Syrian Arab Republic, which are aimed at imposing regime change. The Security Council was not designed to be — nor can it act as — an instrument to foment regime changes in any country. The mandate of the Security Council is to promote peace, not violence. It is to prevent destabilization and to protect the innocent, not to use or manipulate them for geopolitical purposes. These are also the responsibilities of the United Nations as a whole.

We support the efforts being made to achieve a peaceful solution to the situation in that country, in full respect for its sovereign rights. Cuba shares the concerns regarding the loss of innocent lives in Syria, as anywhere in the world.

At the same time, we reiterate our categorical rejection of any form of direct or indirect foreign intervention, including the provision of logistical support to irregular armed groups. An intervention by foreign forces in Syria would have serious consequences for international peace and security, in particular in the Middle East. Taking into account recent experiences and the precedents set as a result — in which we witnessed the manipulation of the Charter of the United Nations, the application of double standards and the flagrant violation of international law — we reiterate our rejection of any attempt to undermine the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The responsibility of the international community towards a Member State in these difficult times is to provide aid in order to uphold peace and stability in that country. We reaffirm our confidence in the capacity of the Syrian people and Government to resolve their internal problems free from foreign interference. We call for full respect for the self-determination and sovereignty of that Arab country.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

**Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to convey my delegation's most sincere congratulations to the friendly delegation of the United States on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. I thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing this morning, during which he provided very important information regarding recent developments in the region.

My delegation also endorses the statements made on behalf of the Group of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Monthly briefings are organized on a regular basis, open debates are held, meetings with influential parties are organized, and initiatives are taken by regional and international bodies and even some States, and we continue to hope for positive change on the ground. We hope to see encouraging signs of increased effort to achieve the ultimate goal of peace through a two-State solution, with both States living side by side in peace and security, and to achieve the decades-old Palestinian dream of establishing a recognized, independent, sovereign State on its historical land, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Unfortunately, the signs we see are dangerous ones. Inflexibility on the part of Israel has become the rule, as have the policies of equivocation in the political approach to the Israeli-Arab conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian question in particular. The signs on the ground are not promising. Rather than a real desire for peace, there seems to be an unfair settlement policy that deprives citizens of their rights, restricts their freedoms, causes them to be massacred, expels them from their own houses and usurps their land.

Everybody in the world wants more justice and more freedom. Those are legitimate aspirations to a decent life in which rights such as those to gender, racial and cultural equality may be enjoyed. Despite the rising tides of liberation from injustice across the world, the Palestinian people are still struggling for the very basic rights enjoyed by States Members of our Organization enjoy — the right to live on one's own independent, sovereign land. These very fundamental rights are still inaccessible to the Palestinian people, who are faced with daily suffering. There has been no clear international condemnation of the ongoing repression of the Palestinians. The principles of international law must be respected.

My delegation reaffirms the legitimacy of Palestine's quest for full membership of the United Nations. Tunisia recalls the historical, legal and moral importance of that legitimate claim. It is the right of the Palestinian people to enjoy their rights after a long struggle. The Palestinian people have the right to recognition of their independent sovereign State. They have the right to live on their historic lands, based on the June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as their capital, in peace and security alongside the Israeli people.

My country believes that due importance must be attached to Palestine's request. It is not an obstacle to peace, but will promote peace. It is not a mere unilateral act; far from it. The Palestinians have adhered to all the relevant rules in their quest to achieve membership of the United Nations, which enjoys broad international support, as reflected in the acceptance of their membership in UNESCO.

Over and above the recognition by such organizations and international bodies as the World Bank, we would like to see recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to build their independent State and of the progress that has been made in establishing their institutions, the rule of law and economic rights. That is important.

Israel's settlement activities pose a serious threat. Despite some differences of opinion, all States agree that the settlement policy remains a significant obstacle to relaunching the peace process. Tunisia firmly condemns the ongoing settlement activities and their intensification last year and this, which have led to an alarming Shrinkage in the land area of Palestine and will have a significant impact on the outcome of any negotiations that might be undertaken to resolve the conflict.

Israel's settlement activities violate international law. That is an established fact. They violate the Road Map, as affirmed in the Quartet's statements. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention declares such settlement activities illegal. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 2004 addresses the legal impact of the construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also considers the wall to exacerbate the daily suffering of the Palestinian people.

Tunisia calls for an immediate end to the separation of families, the looting of lands and expulsions being carried out by the settlers, the Judaization of Jerusalem and the altering of its religious and demographic composition. Tunisia fully condemns any plan to change the demographic and religious nature of that city by the occupying State. Israel continues to impose such changes despite the numerous appeals of the international community to end such practices.

We call for an immediate end to the blockade of Gaza, which is causing terrible suffering for more than 2 million Palestinians. Despite the claims of Israel, the occupying Power, that recent measures have led to a decrease to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, official United Nations reports note a strengthening of the blockade.

Finally, the political stalemate in the occupied Palestinian territories and the lack of hope for peace, despite the commendable efforts of Jordan and the latest statement of the Quartet on 11 April (see SG/2182), cause my delegation to fear a new cycle of tension in the region that could lead to a further deterioration of the situation. My delegation reaffirms its support for negotiations and dialogue to resolve the

crisis, as well as the role of the international community, which has a historic responsibility to ensure the appropriate context for a settlement.

Tunisia hopes for a more effective role for the influential partners, in particular the Quartet, and looks forward to specific measures to be taken by the Quartet. Moreover, we want harsher positions taken with regard to Israel. My delegation also reiterates the need to compel Israel to fully withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories in Lebanon and Syria.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

**Mr. Rakhmetullin** (Kazakhstan): I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation group in New York.

Israel's military occupation of Arab lands, flagrant violations of international law and denial of the national rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people remain at the heart of unrest in the region. Prospects for peace and justice in the region are damaged by Israel's colonial and discriminatory policies in Arab occupied land. Israel, the occupying Power, continues to approve settlement plans in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, construct an apartheid wall, restrict Palestinian access to places of worship, disregard acts of violence by extremist settlers against civilian Palestinians, deny the free movement of people and goods, and further confiscate Palestinian homes and lands. Such illegalities have become part of a daily cycle of oppression and aggression against the Palestinian people that systematically undermine prospects for the two-State solution and destabilize the region.

Similarly, Israeli practices in East Jerusalem — including settlement construction, excavations under the Al-Aqsa mosque, the depopulation of Jerusalem's indigenous Palestinian citizens, in addition to the illegal appropriation of Palestinian properties, the isolation of Jerusalem from its natural Palestinian environment, and the alteration of the city's demographic composition and character — are more alarming than ever before. These illegal Israeli practices pose a challenge to the international community. The United Nations therefore has a special responsibility to pressure Israel to put an end to these aggressions and respect international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The United Nations also has a responsibility to assist the Palestinian people in realizing their right to self-determination, sovereignty and independence in their own State in the territory occupied since 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and in finding a just solution for the plight of the Palestinian refugees, in line with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

The plight of thousands of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons represents a question of missing justice. They are victims of systematic inhuman practices perpetuated through the enactment and application of Israeli laws. Those political prisoners are deprived of the basic human rights guaranteed by international law, such as the rights to education, medical treatment and communication with the outside world, and subject to administrative detention without charges or trial. Therefore, it is now time for international action to advocate their cause so that they may enjoy freedom, justice and dignity in their homeland.

We affirm that the international consensus to realize a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict requires the enforcement of international law and the implementation of legitimate international resolutions. Therefore, acknowledgement of and full support for Palestinian State-building efforts, and meeting and maintaining our obligations and political and financial commitments to the Palestinian Authority, are commendable actions at this significant juncture.

I wish to reaffirm the full support and solidarity of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation with the Palestinian people in their endeavour to regain their legitimate and inalienable national rights, including the rights of return and self-determination, and the establishment of the independent Palestinian State on its national soil, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation joins the international community in reaffirming that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan and its institutional structure, as well as Israeli measures to impose jurisdiction and administration there, have no legal effect. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation demands that Israel abide fully and immediately by resolution 497 (1981) and, in implementation also of resolutions 242

(1967) and 338 (1973), withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967.

**The President**: I give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

**Ms. Lalama** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to express its point of view on the situation in the Middle East and the Palestinian question, particularly during these important times, which require the Security Council to address the situation. I would like to begin by thanking you, Madam, for having convened this debate. My country aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Government of Ecuador respects the norms and principles of international law, in particular in the context of the pacific settlement of disputes, and expresses its concern over the Council's prolonged management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In our desire to support stability in the region, my delegation has recognized Palestine as a State.

Over the past months, relevant events, such as the historic speech of President Mahmoud Abbas before the General Assembly on 23 September 2011 (see A/66/PV.19), as well as the support of 132 States Members of the United Nations in recognizing Palestine as a State, have strengthened the conviction that the Palestinian Authority is able to govern a State. It is therefore time to seek mechanisms to actively support progress in the efforts for peace and to strengthen the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to meet the current and future security needs of the Palestinian people.

Despite the reports of the Quartet and its call for dialogue and cooperation between the parties in order to facilitate social and economic development in Area C, the latter has been undermined by 124 illegal Israeli settlements that prevent the establishment of a viable Palestinian State within pre-1967 borders. Area C comprises 62 per cent of the West Bank and includes the most fertile, resource-rich land, which the future Palestinian State and its people could make use of in living a life of dignity.

Palestinian construction is permitted on only 1 per cent of Area C, most of which has already been developed. In that regard, my delegation calls on the Council to demand that Israel halt its demolition of homes and structures that were built without permits, some 4,800 of which have been destroyed since 2000, and instead to support Palestine with a programme to construct schools and hospitals and provide water, sanitation and other infrastructure projects.

The possibility of finding a solution to the establishment of two States has diminished as a result of Israeli settlement expansion, in addition to the military separation wall, obstacles to free movement, the denial of access to vital natural resources, and the erosion of Palestinian ownership in the West Bank, upon which the hopes of a Palestinian State are based.

There is no norm of international law that would allow Israel to imprison a Palestinian suspect for an indefinite period without informing the detainee of the charges against him or her or providing any evidence. The protest by 1,600 Palestinian prisoners who have united on an indefinite hunger strike is part of their broader struggle to attain an independent State.

The international community must continue to pressure Israel to end its occupation and its violations of human rights. It is Israel's responsibility to promote negotiations that will lead to a two-State solution in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions.

To conclude, I consider it timely to remind the Security Council once again of its responsibility in this matter, which impedes peace and security in the Middle East and, accordingly, the tranquillity of all States Members of the United Nations. My delegation calls for dialogue between the parties in order to ensure that the two States, Israel and Palestine, can finally live side by side in the region within safe and recognized borders.

**The President**: There are no more names inscribed on my list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.*